

EXCAVATIONS AT SPARTA, 1924-25.

(PLATES XIV.--XXII.)

§ I.—INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN the British School decided to bring to an end its excavations at Sparta in the year 1910, after five campaigns, it was fully aware that the possibilities of the site were by no means exhausted. Its varied activities before the war, at Phylakopi and in Crete, and after the war at Mycenae, have formed the subjects of full reports in various volumes of the *Annual* from XVII (1910-11) onwards, but when Mr. Wace's tenure of the Directorship came to an end, the decision of the Committee to resume work on a site of the Classical period led to the renewal of work at Sparta forming their first choice. The fact that the new Director had taken an active part in three of the five original campaigns was an additional reason for returning there, and it was accordingly resolved to resume operations in 1924, with the Theatre as the first objective; and in hopes, moreover, of carrying out a fuller exploration of the Acropolis, and also of gaining fresh information as to the topography of ancient Sparta by extensively testing portions of the ancient city previously unexamined. The principal results of the work of the two seasons, 1924 and 1925, form the subject of the present report.

The chief features of this work have already been described, for a special illustrated report was circulated in the autumn of 1924 which summarised the results of that season's work, and the work of 1925 was described in some detail, in the Annual Report of the School for the Session 1924-25.¹

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the generosity of the Hellenic Government in granting us permission to resume work at Sparta, and to record our appreciation of the ready help and encouragement afforded by the officials of the Archaeological Section of the Ministry of Religion and

¹ Cf. also my shorter accounts in 'Archaeology in Greece,' *J.H.S.* xliv. pp. 257-260, and xlv. pp. 213-217.

Education in the necessary arrangements for the work. During 1924 their representative was Mr. Chr. Karouzos, recently appointed Ephor of Antiquities for Thessaly, and in 1925 Professor S. Kamarinos, Rector of the Gymnasium at Sparta, officiated as Ἐπιμελητής, both rendering most valuable assistance. We were further indebted to the same department for permission to engage as foreman G. Alexopoulos, head Phylax at Mycenae, who had served there in the same capacity under Mr. Wace, and at Sparta again amply proved his worth. It was a pleasure to receive Dr. K. Romaios, then Head of the Archaeological Section of the Ministry on more than one visit which he paid to the site.

For quarters we again secured the upper floor of the house which we had rented in 1906–10, conveniently situated both for the site of the excavations and for the Museum. Labour was not difficult to obtain, and many of the men reached a high standard of skill and keenness; a few of our senior hands had worked for the School during the original excavations, and had not forgotten their early training.

Both in 1924 and 1925 the main undertaking was the site of the Theatre, where, by the end of the second season, we had cleared part of the Orchestra, a large portion of the Stage, and of the retaining-walls, and had made extensive trials in the *cavea*. This work is described below, in § 2. Our next most important task was the clearance, not yet completed, of the area situated between the Sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos on the Acropolis and the back wall of the *cavea*, which proved unexpectedly rich in finds, and in addition contained the foundations of a structure which seems to have been a portico, to the south of the east end of the Sanctuary. This forms the subject of § 4 below. The other regions investigated in the two seasons include a portion of a domestic and commercial area, north of the Acropolis (General Plan **L 11**, *B.S.A.* xiii. Pl. I), chiefly interesting for the yield of moulded Hellenistic pottery, some of which is described by Miss Hobling in § 5; the discovery of pieces of moulds supports the view that a local fabric is here represented. A few pieces of Geometric pottery indicated that the site was occupied since the earliest days of Historic Sparta, and the presence of late Roman coins shewed that the occupation, even if not continuous, could be traced down to the late fourth century of our era. Another residential quarter was located in 1925 on the south slope of the high ground which runs eastwards from the Acropolis proper towards the river, where Mr. Cuttle found,

and cleared, most of an extensive Roman villa, with an elaborate system of hypocausts. Many of the floors, with the pillars of superposed bricks, circular in section, supporting them, came to light. The incidental finds were not of great importance. Other trials in this region yielded disappointing results.

On the Acropolis itself, in 1925, Mr. Cuttle also cleared, and was able with the help of Mr. De Jong to plan, the greater part of an important Byzantine church (possibly to be identified with that of H. Nikon), of which the ruined triple apse had long been visible above ground. This lies about 120 metres east of the Chalkioikos site. On the slope below it to the south he also found in 1924 remains of a house, or possibly a bath-building, with a well-preserved mosaic pavement exhibiting a polychrome design of geometric type, alongside which was a cement-built water-conduit with several pipes, apparently of late Roman date. In 1925 another mosaic pavement came to light a short distance south-west of the Theatre, and may prove to be closely connected with the bathing-establishment of which remains are still visible. This will be further investigated, as the construction was of strikingly massive type, and a few fragmentary marbles found there suggest the possibility of further and more interesting finds of this nature.

It will thus be seen that the minor excavations have so far yielded rather disappointing results—some less productive trials are left out of account altogether—except in so far as they shew us the extent to which Sparta in the Roman age had become a city of luxurious residences. Our only possible clue to the existence of a sanctuary hitherto obtained lies in the discovery of a few votive model limbs and heads in terracotta, found at one point under the floor of the large Byzantine church already mentioned. It is essential, however, that more trials be made, over several areas still scarcely touched, and the possibility of further discoveries seems by no means limited to the two principal sites, which will form our main objective in the third season.

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